

LEBANON

Q: Then, off you went, from this pleasant interlude as U.S. Ambassador to Denmark, back into the heat of the kitchen. Where did you go from when to when?

DEAN: I went from 1978 to 1981 to Lebanon— three years. I would have stayed longer, as President Reagan had asked me to, but I first asked President Sarkis of Lebanon whether he was going to stay on as President of Lebanon. But I don't want to get ahead of myself.

I have to give a little explanation of Lebanon and why Lebanon worked as far as I was concerned. In 1947. I was shipped off to France by my parents. I went to law school in France. There, I met a Lebanese friend who was the owner of the largest brewery in the Middle East. It was he who introduced me to my wife-to-be a couple of years later. My wife's father was a banker for a French bank with interests in the Middle East. One of his residences was in Beirut. At the time, there were only about three large foreign banks in the whole of Lebanon.

In the 1950s my father-in-law had made a name for himself by selling off French assets to the people in the country where they were located. So, whatever was in Syria, for example insurance companies and the tobacco monopoly, was sold to the Syrians. Whatever was in Lebanon, for example the tobacco monopoly and banking establishments, was sold to the Lebanese. In Egypt, it was to the Egyptians. In Turkey, it was to the Turks. He did it because he saw the handwriting on the wall and said: "It's better for us foreigners to be a junior partner, and let the people in the country buy the foreign assets located in their country." So, when I got to Lebanon, I was not an unknown quantity. I had traveled to Lebanon several times with my wife to visit her parents. I visited my friends in Lebanon with whom I had gone to school. The President of Lebanon at the time I became U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon was a former governor of the National Bank. Naturally, my father-in-law, who had died in 1970, had had a relationship with the leading Lebanese banker in town. When we arrived in Beirut in 1978, a full civil war had been going on for three years.

Let me just start from the beginning.

Q: Whom did you replace, by the way?

DEAN: Dick Parker.

Q: Whom I have interviewed.

DEAN: I don't know whether it's in his oral history, but at one point, I think, the Lebanese army wanted to go south in Lebanon. Lebanon was very much in the news two months before my arrival. The Israeli army said "No." Ambassador Parker could not get Washington to overrule the

Israeli Interference in Lebanon and the Lebanese army could not send its troops to South Lebanon. Shortly thereafter, Ambassador Parker was transferred from Beirut. May I say at this point that Dick Parker was a very erudite, experienced U.S. diplomat who, in my opinion, was not supported by our own government when he invoked the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, which was and still is, U.S. policy. Well, I had the same situation happen when I was Ambassador. The Lebanese army wanted to move two battalions of the Lebanese army to South Lebanon without too much referral to Washington. I helped the Lebanese move the troops south, and I did not need any "advice" from Israel, Syria, or anybody else on what the Lebanese central government wanted to do in its own country. When I arrived in 1978, Lebanon was in the midst of a civil war.

Q: Between who and whom?

DEAN: It started as a war against Palestinians who had been chased out of Palestine. The large number of Palestinians who came to Lebanon after the establishment of Israel did not at first live to camps. They felt so much at home in Lebanon that some Lebanese felt that they wanted to take over the country. Some Lebanese were so concerned about the threat to Lebanese identity and control that the Lebanese Government called in the Syrian army to contain the Palestinians. It should also be said that many well-educated Palestinians were well received in Lebanon, intermarried, took Lebanese nationality, and made major contributions in nearly every field of endeavor. In the mid-1970s, the conflict degenerated into a civil war and struggle for power between two Maronite factions, i.e., led by Gemayel and Chamoun. Then, some Moslems and other Christians joined the fray. When I was in Lebanon, there were 18 different religious confessions in the country, I visited the chiefs of every one of the various confessions. After being named Ambassador to Lebanon by President Carter, the night before I was supposed to go for my confirmation hearings before the Senate, I got a phone call from the personal assistant to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance saying "John, you are going tomorrow to be confirmed by the Senate,

This is your third time as ambassador and you have been chargé d'affaires twice before. Do you really want this job?" I said: "Why?" "Well, we just found out that your mother was Jewish." I said: "My father, too." "And do you still think you can go as ambassador to Lebanon?" I replied: "I thought I represented a secular state. If you think this is not the case, that I am not qualified to go as a representative of the United States to Lebanon, please let me know and I will withdraw on my own." "Oh, no, no, no. We were just wondering." The next day, I went up for my hearings, and after a rather thorough going over by Senator Javits, I was confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon.

Q: He was a senior Senator from New York and a strong representative of the Jewish community

DEAN: That's right. He said: "Mr. Ambassador, if you are confirmed, do you think you really can function there? You are known as an interventionist. You intervene wherever you go. Do you think that is what you want to do in Lebanon?" I said: "Senator, in all fairness, I tried to do in Southeast Asia – Laos and Cambodia – what I could do to bring as much peace as possible. In Lebanon, it is again a very difficult situation. I don't know whether I am known as an interventionist, but I do believe that sometimes you have to intervene in order to make certain things happen. But I certainly don't intervene for the sake of intervening." It was a rather spirited exchange. Fortunately, Senator Pell, my friend at the time, spoke up and said: "John has done an outstanding job in previous postings", and I was confirmed.

That was the background before I arrived in Lebanon. As I took the plane to fly to Beirut, I was given a coat which weighed a ton. It was an armored coat which was so heavy that I had to be strong to put it on. I had two bodyguards. It was really like a third-rate B movie. My arrival at the airport...

Q: With your wife?

DEAN: My wife arrived two weeks later. I had mentioned at the time that I would only go to Lebanon if I could take my wife with me. I would not go alone. I said that meant that if my wife goes, all officers assigned to the post could also take their wives along. I said that it makes for a better atmosphere if the officers can take their wives along rather than being off by themselves in a place such as Beirut. As the Lord's Prayer says. 'Don't lead me into temptation.' I thought it was much better to have the wives along. I had my way.

It was the beginning of a challenging assignment which I enjoyed, and I would like to believe that the Secretary of State, Cy Vance - a great American statesman - appreciated my service in Lebanon. I was able to put forward my views on the key subjects of the area and I would get a fair hearing.

I came to Lebanon at a time of unbelievable strife. It was a war which was being kept going by elements within the country and there were also other players from outside who also took sides in this free for all civil war.

Q: Who were the outside players?

DEAN: I think that Lebanon was like a football which was being pushed

around not only by the domestic forces, the Maronites, the Shia, the Sunnis, the Druses, the Orthodox, the Syriacs, the Palestinians, but I also think the major countries were involved, seeking to further their own interests by supporting certain groups, be it the French, the British, the Americans, or the Israelis. The Syrians, the Iraqis, and the Iranians also had their objectives. They are traditional players in the Middle East, and this was to be expected. I think it was one of the most important periods in my career as well. Everybody knew my background. By that time, I was in the "Who's Who". Nobody had a hard time looking up that my mother's name was Askenazy, They knew where I was born. I was born in Germany. What I did from the beginning in Lebanon was to have a relationship with everybody. When Mr. Godley had been ambassador in 1975, when the civil war started, the President of Lebanon, Suleyman Frangieh, went to New York to speak at the United Nations, and some dogs from the U.S. Customs Service did some sniffing of Frangieh's baggage and the dogs acted as if there were some drugs in the luggage.

Q; You are talking about drug dogs.

DEAM: That's right. They thought that maybe President Frangieh had in his luggage something which might be illegal to bring into the country. It caused a major rift between the U.S. Ambassador in Beirut and the President of the Lebanese Republic. The President of the Republic, Frangieh, never, never forgave the Americans, and he held the U.S. Embassy in Beirut responsible for what he considered an insult. When I arrived in Beirut in 1978, Frangieh was living in northern Lebanon in retirement. He was the leader of the Maronites in northern Lebanon. He had the reputation of being quite close to the Syrians who apparently supported him.

I decided I would call on all political personalities, regardless of their political views or religious affiliation. I did, including on former President Frangieh. My request to be received by Frangieh was accepted and I informed the Lebanese President, Elias Sarkis, Bashir Gemayel, and the Syrians that I was driving up to President Frangieh's home.

Well, driving from Beirut up through the northern city of Tripoli in Lebanon, and up to this huge home, a palace, I had to go through very different control checkpoints. They were manned either by Syrians, by Maronite soldiers, by pro-this militia, pro-that militia, but it was worked out. I drove up in a three-car convoy to meet with Frangieh with whom we had not had any contact since 1975. I went up there and I met his son. There had been a lot of infighting between Frangieh's forces and another Christian militia, the Phalange. They had been killing each other, to be very frank. I came and paid my respects on the old man. He said: "You know, I am receiving you not as the American Ambassador." I said: "What's the matter?" "I am receiving you because I used to go hunting with your mother-in-law and she was an excellent shot. I want to honor her. That is why your request to see me has been accepted." It was an elegant way to establish a relationship with him.

I also did the same with other leaders. I called on the Sunni Mufti. I called on the head of the Shia community, who only died recently. I called on the head of the Druzes, Walid Jumblat, and Arslan. Wherever I went, I showed respect and willingness to enter into a meaningful dialogue.

I also made it very clear that I would always inform the President of Lebanon, Mr. Sarkis, of whatever I was doing. When I traveled, I would

tell him where I was going and I would ask for security assistance. When I traveled in areas under-government control, he might give me an outrider or two, but there were areas where government control was not present. I then went to talk to the various factions who controlled the terrain: the PLO, the Phalange, the Syrians, etc... For example, I would say: "I am going down to the southern border. I want to endow a Shia nursing home near Saida and help deserving students, but I do need security assistance to get there", or I would get some outriders from the PLO or some Shia elements to provide security. Usually, the central government provided a security group from the Ministry of Interior to protect me.

Q: Were you allowed to do that at the time?

DEAN: I did not ask too many questions at that stage. I had received authorization to meet with the PLO. I was given this authorization to take care of security matters and in defense of American interests. I considered meeting with all groups and assisting in humanitarian ventures to be in the defense of American interests. I was determined to be on good terms with all elements in the country. So, when I geared up my motorcade with PLO or other outriders up in front, I would also have waiting for me as I got to southern Lebanon Israeli planes overhead watching me as I was winding my way towards the border.

One of the things that had happened very early when I got to Lebanon was the establishment of a relationship with the United Nations International Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). This military force was supposed to keep the Israelis from going into Lebanon and interfering in their affairs,

and keep the Palestinians from infiltrating into Israel. In short, it was designed to protect the southern border of Lebanon. Early on in my posting to Lebanon I drove down to UNIFIL in southern Lebanon. Having been ambassador in Cambodia and having played a key role in Laos and in Vietnam, I was accustomed to working with the military. I went down to UNIFIL and was met by a Ghanaian general. Well, the Ghanaian general was not terribly effective. I immediately went back to town and sent a message to Washington, saying: "we've got to get a feisty guy in there who is going to fire up these guys so that UNIFIL can carry out its mission. All parties to the conflict know where certain forces are located." If one side wanted to infiltrate into Lebanon or into Israel, they always infiltrated through the least combative UNIFIL forces. Some troops, for example French paratroopers or Irish military, were tough. Whether it was Palestinians or Israelis who tried to go through UNIFIL lines, the tough troops stood their ground. They enforced the law. So? I suggested that UNIFIL get a tough general. Sure enough, the more gentle Ghanaian general was changed, and an Irish officer, General Callahan, came to take command of the UNIFIL forces. He was a hardened general who could not be pushed around either by the Israeli generals or by the Palestinians, or by anybody else.

I also established what I could call a good relationship with the Syrians. It's not that I like Syrians or don't like them. They were a fact of life in Lebanon and above all in the Bekkaa Valley. They were very important. Traveling all over Lebanon was one way of showing the unity, the independence, and the full sovereignty of Lebanon. Usually, I took the ambassadorial limousine, and with an American security contingent, drove to visit U.S. economic aid projects, humanitarian groups, or political leaders. On my limousine I had two

flags flying, the American President's flag and the American flag; this way, I drove to every part of Lebanon. I first told the President where I was going. I told the Syrians where I was going. I sent a message down to Tel Aviv saying: "This is where I am going." People in Damascus, I would tell them: "I am going to look at a former American aid project. I am going to look at a school. I am going to look at some Armenian orphanages" whatever it might be. I went out as often as I could. My security officers had kittens but in this way I showed the unity of Lebanon within the territorial limits recognized by the International community.

Q: I was going to say, an ambassador had already been killed.

DEAN: That's right. The previous ambassador had been killed. Frank Meloy had been assassinated. I will be glad to go into this question if people want to go into it, but you must have the story from Ambassador Parker or Ambassador Brown. The PLO helped us to get the body back and, to the best of my knowledge, the PLO were not involved in the assassination of Meloy, whom I knew and had served with in Saigon so many years ago.

Q; Who did it?

DEAN: I don't think this is germane to my watch.

Q: Well, but...

DEAN: I don't know who did it. but I know who did not do it and they got blamed for it : the PLO. We went to the PLO. I think it was Dean Brown who did when he was acting there in the interim period and they helped us find the body and bring the body back.

Let me return to my extensive travels through Lebanon, not for pleasure, but to show the flag and thereby give visible and concrete support to what Washington said was its policy toward Lebanon: support for the territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty of Lebanon. I did go to the south. I went to UNIFIL. I went all the way down to the Lebanon-Israel border. I went to areas which were supposed to be strictly Shia-controlled. I went into the Bekkaa where the Syrians were supposed to be in control. I went down to the southern part of the Bekkaa Valley. I went to Akkar, in northern Lebanon, which is right next to Syria, where no American had been for years, always flying the flag and saying: "I am doing this and this and I am showing the unity of this country," When people said: "You can't do it," I would say; "I am accredited to the President of Lebanon, and as long as he gives me the green light, I can go." This led to a very stirring exchange of cables with my colleague, Sam Lewis, our ambassador in Tel Aviv. There were certain things that he objected to. For example, when I observed an Israeli plane over Lebanon on just a reconnaissance mission. I would send a regular protest to Tel Aviv and a copy to Washington because it was breaking the U.N. resolutions which were in existence. Overflight has become so routine today that Israelis can bomb from Israel a power plant in Lebanon and nobody says "Boo". In those days, every time there was a crossing of the border, we protested. There was no blue line, but there were only the instructions from Washington which supported only the internationally recognized borders of Lebanon, its territorial integrity, and its sovereignty over that land. I supported this policy by actual deeds. putting myself on the line. "This is one country. It is not under Syrian domination or under Israeli control, or anything else."

Q: What was Sam Lewis's problem with this?

DEAN: Well, he objected to a certain number of things. For example, when I was trying to work with the Phalange militias of Bashir Gemayel, I told Bashir Gemayel: "You should stop seeing the Israeli Mossad officers who are coming all the time to Lebanon because it makes you look 'beholden' to the Israelis. You (Bashir), you are a Lebanese trying to maintain Lebanese independence and you cannot lean toward any of your neighbors. If you like, we can establish a direct link with you so that you do not have to rely on any immediate neighbors of Lebanon."

I don't want to mention names because some of the people who came to see Bashir Gemayel are still prominent today. They gave him money, weapons, advisers, and from time to time Mr. Begin asked to see him. In that case, an Israeli helicopter was sent, and he flew to Israel. I said to Bashir: "If you do that and it is known, you are endangering the future of the Christian community. You, the Christians of Lebanon, are part of the Middle East. Don't factor yourself out. If you want support for an independent, sovereign, tolerant Lebanon, look to the United States. Look to the master and not to the servant." Anyway, Bashir Gemayel and I used to meet at first in the high mountains, in a Christian monastery, where I would try to persuade him, saying: "Look, the entire Middle East had Christians, Jews, and Muslims, and all of them lived together, especially in Lebanon. Now, a Jewish state has been established. If Lebanon, which is a multi-religious state, takes sides in the Near East confrontation, you are going to hurt the many different Christian groups in the Middle East, which are all minorities. The Maronites are only one Christian religion in the region. There are the Jacobites, the Chaldeans, the Assyrians, the Syriacs, etc. You also have the Greek Orthodox and the Armenians; add some Protestants... Don't define yourself

in religious terms. You are a Lebanese nationalist. If you are a Lebanese nationalist, you want your country free of any foreign forces. Above all, you have a majority of Sunni and Shia. You have Druzes; all Christians, Moslems, and Jews living in Lebanon are first and foremost Lebanese. You want a free Lebanon within internationally recognized borders."

My own assessment of Bashir was that he was a Lebanese nationalist with strong Christian leanings. He had charisma. He reached beyond the Christian community. Mind you, the Christians - especially Maronites - were fighting among themselves. You had the Chamoun Tigers fighting the Gemayel Phalangists. Some of the Greek Orthodox got along well with the Sunnis. The Shia had a relationship with other religions, Lebanon was a maze of different political and religious groups who nonetheless had a common bond in Lebanon. I urged Bashir to have a direct relationship with the United States, which might be able to help him. I was doing this because I honestly believed this was in U.S. national interests, that we should be able to have a dialogue and influence with all elements. "For example, I went regularly to the Sunni Mufti who was a very fine human being. I went regularly to the Shia chief. I visited the head of the Druzes and was his guest at his castle. We spent the night there and talked about the need for all groups to work together in the overall interest of Lebanon. I maintained a link with all political and religious groups, including with the Vice Prime Minister of Syria. After all, the Syrians played a major role in Lebanon and on the broader scene of Israel's place in the Near East. With Bashir Gemayel, I thought it was important for him to look for support anywhere except to Israel. At the beginning of my tour of duty in Lebanon, the Israelis came regularly to see Bashir, or the Israelis sent a helicopter to fetch him for meetings with top Israeli leaders.

I am going to be very frank: my effort to wean him away from the Israelis and look to the United States for support was quite successful. It was a covert relationship. He received funds and advisers from the U.S. instead of dependence on Israel; in short, my goal was to move Bashir to a more neutral position in the Near East imbroglio. As you know, after I left Lebanon, Bashir was elected President of the country. I will just finish this particular part of the story: Bashir telephoned me when I was on vacation in Malaysia, in 1982 I think. I was then ambassador to Thailand. Bashir said; "John, I want you to attend my inauguration." This never happened because he was assassinated and his brother Amin was elected to succeed Sarkis.

My relationship with Bashir was matched by other meetings with leaders from the left, Sunnis, Shia, Druzes, etc... The head of the country was President Sarkis. He was an extremely honest, intelligent and moderate person who tried to steer a realistic course between Syria's historic role in Lebanon and Israel's ambitions in building their Zionist state. Sarkis was a Lebanese nationalist in the best tradition of Lebanon's role as a link between the Mediterranean world and the Arab Near/Middle East. Sarkis was a Maronite but his religion was subordinated to the duties of serving his country with tolerance and justice for the entire population, which was in majority Moslem. Sarkis and I were neighbors in the hills overlooking Beirut.

I used to go to the Presidential Palace twice or three times a week to play bridge with him. In our regular bridge games we had Sunni, Shia, Druze, or Christian players, and the atmosphere was always most pleasant. Colonel Johnny Abdo, Chief of Intelligence, often came to the Presidential Palace when I called on Sarkis professionally. Abdo was an outstanding officer with whom I worked closely. He was on good terms with all elements in.

Lebanon and knew what was going on in every corner of the country. Sarkis knew that his capacity to have an impact on the Near East political scene was limited. He therefore placed a great deal of emphasis on the stability of the Lebanese currency. During my three years of service in Lebanon, the Lebanese Pound was worth three pounds to the dollar. Today, it is 1,500 pounds to one U.S. dollar. It went up as far as 3,000 pounds to the dollar. During Sarkis's presidency, the Lebanese currency remained at U.S. 1 dollar equals three pounds. That was a great achievement for which nobody gave Sarkis credit at the time. Today, the Lebanese have realized the great contribution he made to his country.

A word about the two Lebanese Prime Ministers with whom I had the privilege to work. Salim Hoss was Prime Minister for the greater part of my tour. Mr. Hoss is one of Lebanon's most honest and upright leaders. He studied in the U.S, where he earned a PhD in Economics. He worked well with President Sarkis. Mr. Hoss, a Sunni Moslem, at the time was married to a lovely lady who was Christian and who has since died. A perfect gentleman, Hoss strongly supported my efforts to provide military equipment to the Lebanese army. It is worth mentioning that the Lebanese army was a truly multi-religious force, with all religions of Lebanon represented in that body. When in 1980 and 1981 the Lebanese army sent two battalions into South Lebanon, Prime Minister Hoss and a great number of Lebanese politicians and leaders walked in front of the troops, moving south from Sidon, as a symbol of Lebanon reasserting its sovereignty over the South, where a collaborator -- Major Haddad — was a mercenary of Israel, keeping the legitimate Lebanese government from controlling the area.

Shafic-al-Wazzan, Hoss's successor, was a very different personality. Since I do not speak Arabic, conversations with him were carried out in French. Like Salim Hoss, he was a decent, honorable person trying to do his best under difficult circumstances, I also visited with Mr, Karami, in North Lebanon, who became Prime Minister well after my departure. All these Sunni personalities were favorably disposed toward the United States but sometimes queried me why the U.S. was so biased in our policy toward the region.

I have mentioned earlier the links I established with the Lebanese military. The officer corps of the Lebanese Armed Forces was largely French-educated and had excellent links with the French military. When I offered to provide equipment to the Lebanese army in order for them to assert control over their country, I first discussed the matter with my French colleague. The French fully supported the idea, and with the Commander of the Lebanese Army, General Victor Khoury, we drew up a list of military equipment needed by our Lebanese friends. Obviously, our military attaché at the Embassy was of great help. and we provided 105 howitzers, 155 howitzers, and armored personnel carriers among other items. General Khoury was a friend and the relationship among "military to military" was started with General Khoury. It has been continued off and on since 1980.

Finally, I maintained contact with Nabih Berri, who was leader of the Shia militia Amal. For many years now, he has been Speaker of the National Assembly of Lebanon. It gave me a better understanding of the Shia outlook on events in Lebanon, and above all, Israeli incursion into southern Lebanon. Even then, I was aware of the Shia's problems with General Sharon and his ambitions in southern Lebanon. I have remained in casual contact with Mr. Berri whenever I am back in Lebanon.

I want to say something now which I don't think is generally known. Because of the very close personal relationship I had with the President of the Republic and the Governor of the National Bank of Lebanon, I was asked whether I would be agreeable to having the countersignature over the reserves of the National Bank of Lebanon, which were held in Switzerland. To the best of my knowledge, the reserves at that time were still several billion dollars. The Governor of the National Bank, Michael Khoury, said he was afraid that in these unsettled times, some gangster could come and hold a gun to his head saying: "Sign this paper" thereafter releasing 10 million dollars to the thug in Zurich or in Bern. By having two signatures, all releases from the reserves of the National Bank of Lebanon needed my countersignature. As long as I was ambassador in Lebanon this situation prevailed. When I left and I suggested my colleague in Switzerland could be given the signature, the answer was "No, when you leave, this arrangement ends." I don't think there were many American ambassadors who had the signature over the foreign exchange assets of a foreign nation.

I must say that in all of my professional activities in Lebanon, I had the tremendous support of people in Washington, including in the White House. One way to obtain support for a balanced policy toward Lebanon was for some influential personalities to speak up, to form a group who would "lobby" on behalf of U.S. support for a tolerant Lebanon. There are not many people in the U.S. who are willing to go out of their way to support an active U.S. policy in Lebanon. Some other countries have very important lobbies in support of a democratic Lebanon. But I was able to put together a few people in the U.S. who

wanted to help. There were three or four Congressmen who had Lebanese ancestry. I found a U.S. Senator who had some links with Lebanon or Palestine. I went to see the Cardinal of New York, Cardinal Francis Cooke. I had met Cardinal Cooke when he came to visit the troops in Vietnam. The Archbishop of New York is also the chaplain to all Catholics in the U.S. armed services. So, he came out and visited. At one point, when he came to Military Region I in 1970, I was told: "Dean, you take care of the Cardinal" and I was his control officer. So, I got to know him. I called on His Eminence in New York and I said: "Would you, Eminence, accept to come out to Lebanon as my guest? I am the representative of a secular country. So, you come as a guest to Lebanon and then you make your rounds to see all the chiefs of the various religions in that country. But, please, promise me that, first, you go and see the Sunni Mufti and then the head of the Shia community. Afterwards, you call on all the patriarchs of the different Christian religions." He did come. Cardinal Cooke did exactly that. He went first to see the Mufti, and then the Head of the Shia community (I think Shamseddine was his name). Then, he went to the Druze community, and then he went to see the Maronite patriarch, and the Melchite patriarch, and so forth. Whenever I needed money to endow the humanitarian activities of all the religions of Lebanon, I would call His Eminence in New York, who in turn tried to help. He had a wonderful assistant, Monsignor, Charlebois. He was an American of Canadian extraction. He was absolutely fantastic. He was Head of Catholic Relief Services and was very much involved in helping on humanitarian causes. I said: would you ask His Eminence to call the President of the United States; I need money. I need \$500.000 to give to the 18 different religious denominations in Lebanon, for humanitarian projects. "I could not give any less to one. If I did.

that would show that one denomination was not as good as another. So, I always gave half a million dollars to everybody. For example, the Armenian Orthodox, the Armenian Catholics, and the Armenian Protestants each received \$500,000. So did the Shias, the Sunnis, etc... It was usually an orphanage, or an old age home that received the funds. Once, I went to an old age home in Sidon, which was shortly afterwards bombed by the Israelis. I was trying to show physically my respect for every religion, which caused me to do what Benjamin Franklin was told by Congress he should never do: bend his knee when he went to see the sovereign of a foreign court. When I went to all these leaders of the various religious denominations, I very often bowed down to show my respect. Then I would discuss a project which could be helpful to the various religions or to specific institutions. That made me travel to the place which had been designated for a project. Sometimes, it was a very insecure area. But I went anyway to demonstrate that Lebanon was one country and that the U.S. gave material support for all religions. I made no exceptions between Christians and Muslims. To show the true openness of the Lebanese society, I recall that my head steward was a Muslim from southern Lebanon. He always said: "I need a raise, I have so many children." I said: "How much do you need?" He would say: "I need a little bit more money. But, you know, one of my children goes to a Hebrew school." I said: "What do you mean, a Hebrew school?" He said: "Yes. you know, they have very good schools. I don't mind sending my kid to a Hebrew school as long as he gets a good education, and it's free." The tolerance of the Middle East... Remember the Crusaders and their behaviour in the Middle East, and when they came up against the Byzantine Empire. Who remembers today Saladin, the Kurdish Moslem defender of Jerusalem, who finally defeated the Crusaders and told Richard Lion-hearted to go home without holding him for ransom..

As you know, Richard the Lion-hearted then was held for ransom on the Danube and his brother, the king of England, had to pay ransom to the Holy Roman Emperor. The Middle East today remains complicated and it was imperative that I remained on good terms with everybody. Above all, I defended the territorial integrity of Lebanon and I gave strong support to President Sarkis and his Prime Minister. In trying to have contact with all elements having bearing on the Lebanese political scene, I also met with American visitors who often represented strongly pro-Israeli views. For example, at one point, one of the congressmen from the United States came to Beirut in order to help American Jews of Near-Eastern background to marry Jewish girls from Syria or from Lebanon.

Q: This was Stephen Solarz.

DEAN: That's right.

Steve Solarz was a staunch defender of Israel and he used his position in the Congress to advance Israel's interests. I recall on one visit, Solarz was riding with me in the Ambassador's car and as we crossed one of the checkpoints manned by some militias, our armored car picked up a bullet. Steve Solarz asked: "What was that ping"? I replied it was somebody shooting at our car, but he should not worry because our car was armored and it was not a very well aimed shot. Solarz requested that we turn around and drive back to the Embassy so that he could send a message to his staffers in Washington. We did return to the Embassy and the message Steve Solarz sent went something like this: "Arafat tried to kill me." I think this little anecdote shows how differently people interpret events, depending primarily on their

preconceived views of the political situation.

Q: I have interviewed Steve.

DEAN: Steve came a couple of times. I helped Steve with his "war brides" in Syria so that he could be a match maker with his constituents.

At this point, it may be useful to note that I also had meetings with my American colleagues in Damascus. I had regular meetings with the ambassador in Damascus. We met at the Lebanese-Syrian border, lunched together, and tried to work out a relationship which permitted us to work together in the common interest. At all times, I never permitted anybody within Lebanon, or from a neighboring country, to tell me where I could go and where I could not go. I was accredited to the President of Lebanon and he was the only one to advise me on my internal traveling destinations.

Q: Who was the American Ambassador to Syria at that time?

DEAN: Talcott Seelye most of the time. It was a very good relationship and a very harmonious one. I had a good relationship with Sam Lewis in Tel Aviv, but we saw the problems differently. I admired Sam. But I had major differences with him on policy and specific Israeli actions in Lebanon. I did not mind differing. I thought I was being paid to give the best opinions I could, and I did. Perhaps the opening of the State Department files on that period will shed light on these issues.

At one point, I found it necessary to have a relationship with the Palestinians. Looking after the security and national interests of the United States, there was a foreign group in Lebanon which had power and with which I did not have a relationship. Officially, we were not supposed to have it. That group was the Palestinians. At the Embassy I had a telephone which worked by satellite and which connected me with the State Department. It was a very bad connection, but I could go and talk to people in Washington and get confidential advice. These conversations were put on paper but I do not know if they were recorded. In one of the early conversations on this confidential telephone, I asked Washington for authorization to meet with the PLO and they said that if it was in our national security interest I could do it. One of the first important problems I was asked to raise with the PLO was the release of the American hostages in Teheran. It was the autumn of 1979. The U.S. Embassy and its staff were besieged and occupied by Iranian revolutionaries who had deposed the Shah of Iran.

Q: This was November of 1979.

DEAN: That's right. I was asked by my interlocutor in Washington whether the Palestinians might be able to help to obtain the release of the American hostages. I decided to ask my Palestinian contacts. Among those who gave me advice was Walid Khalidi, who later was a professor at Harvard University. He was Cambridge-educated, the son of the last Sunni Mayor of Jerusalem. Today, he must be close to 80. When I worked with him in Beirut, he was very active. I also worked with Abu Jihad, who was assassinated by the Israelis in Tunisia in the 1990s. I also worked with Abu Walid.

Abu Walid wore on his hand a ring which indicated that he was a graduate of Fort Leavenworth, the General Staff College in the U.S. I asked him whether he could do anything to get our hostages in Teheran liberated. Shortly after this conversation, he and Arafat went to Teheran, where they obtained the liberation of 13 American hostages. The 13 hostages were released for Thanksgiving 1979 and there is no doubt that this release was linked to Mr. Arafat's and Abu Jihad's personal intervention with the Iranian authorities in Teheran. Abu Walid was also involved.

Q; And also somebody named McQueen. I think, who had multiple sclerosis, was released.

DEAN: I don't remember all the names of the thirteen who were released but they were African-American, and some women .

While I did have contact with Fatah and the PLO, there were other elements of the Palestinian resistance movement who were very polite to me, but said: "We prefer not to have any contact with Americans, even as nice a guy as you are, but for political reasons, it is better that we don't have contact."

Above all, I worked closely with the Chief of Lebanon's Intelligence Service, Johnny Abdo. Whenever I had a problem of an American taken hostage or detained in Lebanon by some militia or group, I would immediately see Johnny Abdo. Whether it was in Christian or Moslem held areas, Johnny always had a contact with all groups and I called on his assistance very often. I could say: "Can you help me to get so and so released? I cannot have an American taken prisoner in Lebanon."

That link worked very well. Johnny Abdo would go to the Syrians, to the Palestinians, or to various Lebanese factions to plead my case. We had several Americans who were released in Lebanon during my tenure and most of the negotiations were done by Lebanese, Palestinian, or Syrian contacts.

I continued working with the PLO through intermediaries until my departure from Lebanon in 1981. I would ask for escorts in order to assure my security going down south where the PLO were well entrenched. Major Hadad, a Lebanese Christian military man, was a collaborator with Israel. But if I would go to the Christian heartland - the Metn - I would ask the Lebanese Government to give me a couple of outriders or security people. Above all, I took the sovereignty of Lebanon seriously. Whenever there was an infringement of that sovereignty, I would protest. There was a very spirited exchange of messages between the American Embassies in Beirut and Tel Aviv regarding what I considered violations of Lebanese sovereignty, i.e., Israeli over-flights, incursions into Lebanese territory, etc...

Knowing how Washington works, I tried to bring together a group of personalities who would speak up for Lebanon's legitimate interests in Washington. Some Lebanese Christians had contact with Americans particularly interested in protecting or promoting the role of Christians in Lebanon. But the great bulk of the Lebanese in those days looked to France to the extent that a Western protector was required. With the help of Mary Rose Okar of Ohio, Nick Rahal of West Virginia, a Congressman Mc Cormak from California, and Cardinal Cooke, I was able to arouse some interest in Lebanon, a country caught between two larger countries - Syria and Israel - who had different ideas about Lebanon's role in the Near East. I also approached Senator George Mitchell.

Q: Was George Mitchell's mother from the Near East?

DEAN: Yes, to the best of my knowledge, she was either Lebanese or Palestinian. The Senator is a wonderful human being, but he told me at the time that he would prefer not to be involved in the Near East. About five prominent Americans came regularly to Lebanon and were interested in knowing what was going on. They returned to the U.S. with a realistic assessment and they made known their findings in their own circles. I also received material assistance from the President of the United States. In short, it got to be known that I was defending Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity. My task was made easy by having this great Lebanese team to work with: President Sarkis; Colonel Johnny Abdo, the Intelligence Chief; and Salim Hoss who was Prime Minister at the time.

One interesting feature was that I was not an Arabic speaker. So, I spoke either in French or in English. Most of my public interventions were in French because in the 1970s the Lebanese were mostly French educated. As American Ambassador I was asked to be on the board of the American University of Beirut. We obtained some funding from the American Government to assist the University in those difficult times. At one point, I also had to intervene, at the request of Lebanese personalities, to have the President of the American University of Beirut transferred. It seems he was not the right person for the job.

In short, Beirut was a very active posting, and at times rather dangerous. The Ambassador had two residences, one in West Beirut

and one in the hills, in Yarzé, near the Lebanese President's Palace, overlooking the city of Beirut. I preferred the latter. It was cooler. The air conditioning did not always work in Beirut because of power failures, so it was cooler in Yarzé. Also, I was closer to the residence of the Lebanese President. The security people sometimes were upset about my extensive traveling around the country. Some of my security people would come to me and say: "Oh. Mr. Ambassador, you can't travel. We have indications that this part of town is not safe." Well, if I had listened to them every time, I would have stayed at home in my bunker and would never have talked with anybody,

Q: Did you get shot at all?

DEAN: Yes. By August 1980, I was perceived, both in the Near East and in the U.S., as a defender of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. I was also known for being a representative of a secular state. Finally, I was seen by the Israeli Government and by some elements in the U.S. as a "protector" of the Palestinians or, as some Israeli newspapers wrote at the time, a champion of Palestinian resistance against Israeli Zionist goals. On August 27, 1980, an election year in the U.S., I was being driven from my residence in the hills of Yarzé to the home of the Acting President of the American University in Beirut. It must have been about 7:00 p.m. As the car turned into the road to Damascus, about 5 minutes from the residence, we saw an old Mercedes car parked at the turn. We were traveling in a three-car motorcade and the Ambassador's car was in the middle. The road at that stretch was wide and a Mercedes car was parked below a small hill overlooking the road. As we turned, our convoy took 21 rifle bullets and two grenades anti-tank .

fired against the car I was in. My wife threw herself on top of me and said: "Get your head down" because I was trying to look out and was stunned by the "fireworks". When you have these light anti-tank weapons (LAWs) explode, there are a lot of sparks and explosions. The two LAWs fired at my car bounced off the rear of the car. I also noticed that on the window of my armored car there were some shots all very well centered where I was sitting, but they had not penetrated because the plastic windows were bullet-proof. As I raised my head, I noticed that the car in front of our car, where two bodyguards and our daughter and her fiancé were seated, had all four tires shot out. Under rifle fire, our daughter, her fiancé, the driver, and the bodyguards fled from the lead car into the third car which was exclusively for the security guards. One man sitting next to the driver in the third car, a bodyguard, fired back. The assassins dropped their weapons and fled. The valiant bodyguard, Mr. Morris., had an automatic rifle with which he could shoot about 20 rounds and he was spraying' the area where the shots had come from. The assassins ran away. Shortly thereafter, security people from the Lebanese Government picked up both the weapons, which had been dropped by the assassins, and the empty containers of the spent light anti-tank weapons. But the job of the security detachment in that situation is to save the Ambassador at all costs. The chauffeur, Cesar, who was unfortunately killed when the embassy was bombed after my departure, had orders to drive as quickly as possible from the scene of the attack and not present a target. The ambassador's car was not only armored; it had self-inflating tires. The tires inflated themselves and we drove as fast as we could to the Embassy in downtown Beirut. When we got to the Embassy, we only had two cars. One car, in which our daughter and her now husband were seated, was left at the place, completely destroyed.

All those seated in the lead car climbed into the third car and drove off. We got to the Embassy, and there the Ambassador's limousine just collapsed. The tires went "whew". I got on the phone to inform the Department of State of the events. "Give me the Secretary of State." I talked with the personal assistant of the Secretary who said: "You sound terribly upset." I said: "Yes, they tried to kill me! but fortunately, I'm still alive!" We had taken 21 bullets and two light anti-tank weapons. I might say that the purpose of shooting a light anti-tank weapon against an armored car is to make the roof of the car pop open. These two light anti-tank weapons bounced off the rear end and did not hit nor penetrate our limousine. The impact of these two weapons would have caused an opening of the top of the car. Then, the assassins shoot down from above and kill the persons in the car. Ten days after the attack on my life, that same method was used on one of the dictators of Latin America. I think it was Somoza, and he was killed.

What happened afterwards was that Johnny Abdo, the Chief of Intelligence, did a very thorough job tracking down the assassins. Not only did his men pick up the empty canister of the two light anti-tank weapons, but they got the numbers of the weapons, and raided the house near the intersection where they confiscated eight more light anti-tank weapons. I received the numbers of all eight which were confiscated and the two which had been spent and had been used. I sent the numbers to Washington, asking: "Would you please trace the shipment of these 10 light anti-tank weapons?" It took three weeks to get a reply. The attack was in August 1980. It was an election year. When I did not get an answer after one week, I picked up the telephone and I was not tender. I said: "Listen, I have been exposed to danger many times in my life. I don't mind putting my life on the line, but I would like to get an answer to my messages about the latest

assassination attempt." Silence. Then, after three weeks, I got the answer of where the light anti-tank weapons came from, where they were shipped to, on what date, who paid for them, and when they got to their destination. Suffice it to say that the weapons had been manufactured in the U.S. and were sold and shipped to Israel in 1974. Hence, American weapons delivered for defensive purposes had been turned against the American Ambassador in Lebanon!

I must admit, my daughter was always affected by the ambush. Still today, it is something that sticks in her throat. My son-in-law, who has been to the Middle East many times, including Israel, is a very even-handed, balanced person. We don't really talk much about this assassination attempt because it is one of the more unpleasant episodes in our lives, and we regret the Israeli involvement in this episode.

As time went on, I did find out a great deal about this incident. All I can say is that it is one of the more unsavory episodes in our Middle Eastern history,

Q: Finishing the story, who got them?

DEAN: Maybe that is something we should leave for another meeting sometime.

Q: You are implying that it was Israel?

DEAN: The arms were shipped to Israel. They were turned against the American Ambassador. We know exactly when they were shipped, what date, what ship, and that the LAWs were shipped to Israel. Our Ambassador to Israel, Sam Lewis, took up this matter with the Israeli authorities.

According to the Lebanese Chief of Intelligence at the time, Johnny Abdo, the most likely group in Beirut behind the assassination attempt were surrogates of Israel.

Let me change the subject slightly. It is still about Israeli involvement in Lebanon during my tenure in that country. In the last part of 1978 - early 1979, the personal assistant of Arafat, Abu Hassan, was assassinated in Beirut. I had been briefed by the Embassy staff that Abu Hassan had also maintained a relationship with one of the intelligence officers on the Embassy staff. When Abu Hassan turned on the ignition key, he set off an explosion and his car exploded. He was killed instantly in this incident. The Lebanese Intelligence Service brought to light that three MOSSAD officers had come to Beirut. They had Belgian and Australian passports, they had registered as tourists in a fancy hotel on the beach in Beirut, and their assignment was to kill Abu Hassan. Perhaps Abu Hassan's greatest drawback, as seen by the Israelis, was his close links to the Americans.

Some people in Lebanon said: "Well, Mr. Ambassador, you sound like you are terribly anti-Israeli. What about the Syrians?" I used to reply that the Syrians had been asked to come into Lebanon by the Lebanese President in 1975 in order to avoid a Palestinian takeover of Lebanon. The Lebanese had asked the Syrians to help them put down a Palestinian uprising endangering the very existence of Lebanon. Hence, their presence in Lebanon was legal. I also added that I knew that the Syrians did interfere a great deal in the domestic affairs of Lebanon. But they had made a major contribution at the time by helping to maintain law and order. Obviously, some elements in Lebanon fought the Syrian presence tooth and nail. Some will say today that Syria has overstayed its welcome. But the Syrians also have their own agenda. Today,

Lebanon is part and parcel of the overall Near East conflict and it is not politic to raise that issue. But it must be said that the illusion some Lebanese groups had, especially the Phalange and the Chamounists, that "Lebanon could balance Syria and Israel, i.e., have Israel offset Syrian ambitions in Lebanon, was and still is fallacious. Lebanon is not only a Mediterranean country, but it is part of the Near East. The population is predominantly Moslem and feels a kinship with other Moslems threatened by Zionist expansionism. It was an unrealistic idea of certain Christian militia in Lebanon to dream about the establishment, with Israeli help, of a Maronistan (i.e., a small Christian state) near Israel where the fringe element, in cooperation with Israel, would brave the entire Arab world in the Near/Middle East. I always tried to convince my Lebanese friends that they should shun open links to Israel, as Israel's covert envoys tried to do with the Phalangists and Chamounists.

Let me say that, at one point, I had a relationship with the Russian Ambassador, Ambassador Soldatov. Ambassador Soldatov had been Deputy Foreign Minister in Moscow, Ambassador to Cuba, Ambassador to the Court of St. James, and he was, at my time, Ambassador in Lebanon. Soldatov's assignment reflected the importance the Soviet Union attached to the area. I went to Soldatov and said; "Listen, I already have enough problems here staying alive. Let's do one thing, Don't have your guys shoot at me and I won't have my friends shoot at you. Let's try to keep U.S.- Soviet confrontation out of this thing. This Near Eastern problem is already complicated enough. But why don't we work together to try to bring all Lebanese elements together?" Once, during my entire tour of duty, and the only time during the entire civil war, the heads and leaders of all Lebanese factions, military.

and government, came together. We all went together to a movie. The leaders of the left, the right, the unmentionables, representatives of various religious groups, all sat together in the same movie theater without killing each other. The Soviet Ambassador and I also attended this gathering. It was the one time we all got together, thereby proving that if the U.S. and the Soviets could do something together, perhaps the various Lebanese groups, militias, etc., could also co-exist together in their overall interest.

When I left Lebanon, I was given the Grand Cross of the Ordre du Cedre by the President of Lebanon in recognition of my work there. I might say it was an unforgettable moment. At the airport, on the day of my departure, again the leaders of nearly all factions and religious groups came to say farewell to my wife and myself. It was a tremendous satisfaction to me that I was perceived as a unifier and not a divider. It was a last tribute to what I thought had been my mission: to hold Lebanon together, radiate tolerance and fairness, and have foreign powers respect the territorial integrity of Lebanon.

Let me mention one particular incident which again came close to costing me my life. The cause was my good relationship with my diplomatic colleagues. I was close to various ambassadors, including many Arab representatives. At the time, there was no Egyptian ambassador in Beirut. But there was a Kuwaiti ambassador, a Saudi ambassador, a Turkish ambassador, and the French, the Belgian, the Dutch, the Spanish, the Brazilian, the Mexican, the British, Canadian ambassadors - you name it. Everybody was represented. One evening, I was at a social reception with the chairman of the Middle East Airlines. He was of Palestinian origin, a Christian man named Assad Nasr. He was a very competent personality and we had become friends. He told me that

evening: "Listen, I just got a phone call. The Saudi and Kuwaiti Ambassadors were shot down in a Lebanese Government helicopter over the Christian part of Lebanon. The Saudi Ambassador has a bullet lodged in his leg. He is in pain. He has been taken to one of the Christian private hospitals in the Christian heartland. You should go and see him." I said: "Who said I should go and see him?" "I am telling you that" said the head of the Middle East Airlines. I said: "Why?" He said: "Because the Saudis look to the United States whenever they have a problem; you are supposed to help them out." I said: "Wait a second. It's 9:00 p.m." He said: "Yes. but 9:00 p.m., Saudis expect service all year round and 24 hours a day." "That means I have to go and get my entire convoy going, and we have to cross over from West Beirut over to East Beirut and go up to the hospital in the hills?" He said: "Yes, that's what you've got to do. I'll tell you. It's good advice." I said: "I will take it." I got my security team together, the convoy of three cars with bodyguards ready to drive at night from West Beirut over into East Beirut and into the hills often manned by Christian militiamen. Driving at night between these two areas was not without risk. I told my wife that I was going to visit my Saudi colleague and she pointed out to me the danger of being on the road at that time of the night. When I got to the hospital, I saw Lieutenant General Ali Shaher, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, lying in a bed under an image of the Virgin. He was a very tall man. He said: "John, please get me to the American Hospital. It's not that I am not getting good medical care here, but I am in pain. I want to go where I am completely at ease and my family can visit me. I want to go to the American Hospital in West Beirut." I said: "Okay. It's now after 10:00 in the evening, so tomorrow morning at 10:00 we will have the motorcade get you and take you to the American University Hospital in West Beirut."

I went back to my residence in West Beirut, which I used in case I was stuck in the city. That night, this was the case. I must have gotten back about 11:30 p.m. I also made arrangements to have the Saudi Ambassador moved by motorcade and ambulance at 10:00 a.m. the next day, to the American University Hospital. The transfer went smoothly. Ali Shaher got a nice room at the American Hospital, his family visited him, and he got great medical attention.

One of the great figures at the time, was Danny Chamoun, the son of Camille Chamoun, former President of Lebanon and militia/political leader of the free enterprise political elements in Lebanon. Danny Chamoun had the idea to visit the Saudi Ambassador at the American Hospital. Danny, like his father, had a relationship with the Saudis, but was that enough to expose his life by crossing over from the Christian-held East Beirut to the more international West Beirut, where enemies of Danny could easily try to kill him? When it was known that Danny Chamoun was at the American Hospital, elements hostile to Danny gathered around the American Hospital and started shooting out the windows at the American Hospital. Who made up the mob trying to storm the American University Hospital? Mostly Lebanese who opposed the Phalange and Chamounists— people who were more influenced by leftist propaganda, who believed that the Syrian model had some value for Lebanon, dissatisfied Moslems and Palestinians who saw in Chamoun "a friend of Israel." By late afternoon, a couple of thousand demonstrators had surrounded the American Hospital and the worst was to be feared. By about 8:00 p.m. I was informed by one of my valiant security men that: "It's absolutely essential that you come immediately to the American Hospital. They are shooting up the American Hospital. There is going to be nothing left. They are going to take it by storm to get ahold of Danny Chamoun. The crowd is made up of Palestinians, Syrians, Muslims,

Christians, crazies who are absolutely determined to destroy the American Hospital. The Saudi Ambassador's life is in danger. He needs you badly. This time, he is calling, for you." I replied: "Okay. fellows, let's get the motorcade ready and go!" We entered through the large garage door of the American Hospital. As the door opened, the guard who opened it got shot and killed by one of the snipers in the crowd. Once inside the hospital, I rushed to Ali Shaher's room. There he was, with his wife and daughter. He said: "Listen, this crowd is crazy. You've got to help stop this madness." I replied: "What shall I do?" He said: "Go and call Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia, and tell him to contact Arafat and President Asaad of Syria and tell them to stop this shooting. Otherwise, this thing is going to get out of hand and everything will go up in flames." I got in my car in the garage and as the garage door opened to drive to the Embassy, rifle shots killed two Lebanese security people protecting the garage door ! Three people had been killed by my entering or leaving the American Hospital. Once out of the hospital, the road to the Embassy was safe. My car picked up a bullet, as usual, but as the limousine was armored I was used to that kind of harassment.

By this time. it must have been 9:00 p.m. at the Embassy and I asked for the communicators to come to the office. I never realized how easy it was to communicate with the world from the American Embassy. The communicators came within 10 minutes. I said; "I would like to talk to Crown Prince Fahd in Saudi Arabia." It was as if I had asked to speak with my aunt in New Jersey. The communicators did not ask me to give them the telephone number. They took it in their stride. Within two to five minutes, I had the Lord Chamberlain of the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia on the line. I identified myself. He said:

"What can I do for you?" I said: "I have a message from Ambassador Lieutenant General Ali Shaher who asked me to transmit it to Crown Prince Fahd." "Yes, Prince Fahd is standing right next to me. What is the message?" "Tell him that they are shooting up the American Hospital in Beirut, where Ambassador Shaher is recovering from a flesh wound in his leg. Please call President Hafez el-Assad and Arafat and tell them to stop the mob from attacking the hospital. If there are no interventions from above, the hospital will be destroyed, many innocent lives will perish, and the confrontation in the Near East will get much worse. Ali Shaher and his family fear for their lives." The Lord Chamberlain said: "Yes Sir, I will transmit the message." We then left the Embassy and drove to the American Hospital. In the process, we picked up a couple of stray bullets as we went into the garage. Nobody was killed this time. The situation was out of hand. They were shooting all over the place. It was about 10:00 p.m. I asked one of my security guards who had a walkie-talkie, to notify my wife. "Please call my wife and tell her that I am not coming home to night. I'm spending my night at the American Hospital, near the room of the Saudi Ambassador, so he will be reassured," Then, I told Ambassador Shaher that I had conveyed his message to the Crown Prince and that I was taking a room near his room. By one o'clock, silence descended on the entire area of the American Hospital of Beirut. Except there was hardly any air conditioning any more and it was hot outside. There were no more windows in most parts of the building. The crowds had dispersed. Next day, I went to see Ambassador Ali Shaher in his room and then I returned to my office. My security guards informed my wife that I was back at the office and not to worry about me. To finish this story. Ambassador Shaher had the

bullet removed from his leg. After Shaher's release from the hospital, he gave me a small, intimate reception and thanked me for my assistance. After he returned to Saudi Arabia, Ali Shaher became Minister for Information for the next 10 years. He then became one of the advisers to King Fahd. From this episode, I came away with a feeling of respect for the role of the Saudis in the Near East, and a better understanding of the U.S. relationship with Saudi leadership. If the Saudis want to play a role, they certainly have the power to do so.

Q: What about Danny Chamoun? Did you get him out?

DEAN: Yes, he got out on his own, the next day. He was a wily fellow and not without charm.

Q: Some years later, the Taif Agreement helped to end the Lebanese conflict.

DEAN: Yes. But that was well after my tour of duty in Lebanon. When I was Ambassador in India years later, I got to be close to Amir Moussa, who was at the time Egyptian Ambassador to India. Later, he became Minister of Foreign Affairs, and now is Secretary General of the Arab League. I saw him a couple of years ago and we talked together about my service in Lebanon. He reminded me that there was no Egyptian ambassador in Lebanon during my time and that was a serious shortcoming. Egypt had always played a balancing role among Arab nations in Lebanon, and the absence of an Egyptian representative in Lebanon during the Lebanese civil war did not help to find a denouement to the strife.

Before I close the chapter on Lebanon, I would like to discuss another event in South Lebanon which had an impact on American relations with the Sarkis government of Lebanon. It is the story of the illegal installation of a radio station manned by Americans in South Lebanon. One day, in 1980, President Sarkis asked me to call on him because he wanted me to intervene with Washington regarding the need to close down a radio station installed on Lebanese soil, without Lebanese authorization, and broadcasting Zionist propaganda. Sarkis explained that a group of Americans had built a radio Station in South Lebanon, had put up barbed wire fences around it, and laid mines "to protect" the site against unwelcome intruders. The area was located in a largely Christian-inhabited area and the radio had no authorization from the central government to establish the site nor to broadcast from Lebanon. Sarkis thought that the Americans were Christian fundamentalists spreading what appeared to be Zionist propaganda. I replied that I would query my government what I should do to comply with Sarkis's request to close down this illegal, unauthorized violation of Lebanese sovereignty.

Two telegrams to Washington went unanswered. After 10 days, I picked up the telephone to call a member of the National Security Council in the White House. The response was quite specific: "John, if you know what is good for you, shut up." I gave President Sarkis a reply that I could not intervene on this matter. Today, more than twenty years later. I believe that a vocal group of American Christians --for reasons of their own -- continue to be strong supporters of Israel. Perhaps, the end goals of Israeli Zionists and American Christian fundamentalists are not quite the same, but today their voices and views are similar.

This interview would be incomplete if I were not to mention the outstanding role of Phil Habib. We were good friends and remained good friends until he died in 1992. I flew over to Washington to attend a memorial service in his honor. If we had a difference of perception, and I am not sure that we did, it was about the feasibility of factoring out the Lebanese problem from the overall Near East imbroglio. Could one make peace in Lebanon without finding a modus vivendi for the Palestinian determination to have a land of their own? Perhaps Phil believed that one could find a way of settling the Lebanese problem through a bilateral Lebanese-Israeli accord. If that was indeed Phil's view, then he reflected in my opinion the State Department's hopes at the time. I felt then, and still believe it today, that Lebanon is part and parcel of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The interview President Emile Lahoud of Lebanon, Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, and the Speaker of Parliament Nabil Berri gave to the Executive Editor of the International Herald Tribune as recently as May 30, 2002 would confirm my analysis. Having said this, Phil's miraculous success to save the PLO from destruction in 1982 made it possible to bring some justice and tolerance into efforts today to find an honorable, fair solution to the problems of the Near East.

When I left Lebanon after 3 years, they gave me and my wife a fabulous send-off. Part of the close relationship I enjoyed with the Lebanese of all religions was due to my wife and her family's reputation in Lebanon. Many Lebanese knew my wife. She had attended university in Beirut for a couple of years while her parents were stationed in the Near East. If my mission to Lebanon was a success,

much of the credit goes to my wife. Judging from President Reagan's letter at the end of my tour, the U.S. Government also thought I had done my duty under difficult circumstances on behalf of my country.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Washington

June 2, 1981

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

I have your letter of January 20, and accept your resignation as Ambassador to the Republic of Lebanon, effective upon a date to be determined.

You have ably represented the interests of the United States under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions, and the combination of skills you have brought to bear in your work have provided a valuable contribution to our relations with Lebanon. You have every reason to be proud of your accomplishments.

I look forward to having you assume your new responsibilities as Ambassador to Thailand and I am counting on your support and expertise in the days ahead,

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

(Signed) Ronald Reagan

The Honorable John Gunther Dean
American Ambassador
Beirut

Dean - 256

EPILOGUE

The Christian militia leader, Bashir Gemayel, was elected President of Lebanon on August 23, 1982. He was the only candidate. In any case, the presidency of Lebanon was, by agreement of all parties, confided to a Maronite Christian. During my tenure, Bashir had moved close to Americans and away from Israelis. It is quite possible that after my departure in July 1981, General Sharon and the Israeli intelligence establishment tried to re-establish their prominent position with Bashir. Whether it was with American approval or not, I cannot tell. In any case, after Bashir's assassination, his brother Amin was under great pressure from the Israelis to sign a bilateral agreement with Israel. This story is well told by Mr. Boykin in his book "Cursed is the Peacemaker".

Shortly after Bashir Gemayel was elected President, I received a telephone call from him while my wife and I were relaxing in the hills of Malaysia from our assignment to Thailand. Bashir told me that he was sending two military officers to Bangkok to fetch my wife and me to attend his inauguration in Beirut as President of Lebanon. It was never to be, because on September 14, 1982 Bashir was assassinated! His brother Amin replaced Bashir as the head of state, but I never had the links with him that I had established with Bashir.

Years later, in the second part of the 1980s, while I was Ambassador to India, I was approached to bring together Rajiv Gandhi and Shimon Peres. This was done at the U.S. General Assembly in New York.

The idea of those who asked me to bring about the encounter was to get India — the leader of the non-aligned world — to get a better understanding of Israel's position. India had in the past given Mr. Arafat a hero's welcome in India. I doubt that this meeting, which was attended by Congressman Solarz, changed much in India's assessment of the Near East conflict.

The question of Palestine and Israel's reluctance to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinians to a home of their own (within 1967 borders) unfortunately did not only impact on neighboring Lebanon but on many countries of the world where the U.S. had, and continues to maintain, its own national interests. Perhaps it can best be summed up by restating that I thought diplomacy was trying to avoid the worst, and I still believe today that "blessed are the peacemakers".